

MICHIGAN



"PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES"

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PROTECTION & ADVOCACY
SERVICE, INC.

**Testimony on HB 4714 (Substitute S-7)
Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service Inc.**

Chris Rodriguez, Director of Governmental Affairs and Media Relations

Before the Senate Committee on Government Operations

July 30, 2013

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Good afternoon, let me start out by expressing my sincere appreciation for affording me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Chris Rodriguez, I am the Director of Governmental Affairs and Media Relations for Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, and we are a private-non profit organization federally mandated to protect the rights of people with disabilities. I will be representing Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service today however I also co-chair the Public Policy Committee for the Michigan Developmental Disabilities Council, sit on the Board of the Association for Children's Mental Health, and am a member of the Governmental Affairs Committee for the National Disability Rights Network in Washington, DC. These positions have given me the opportunity to acutely understand the importance of Medicaid for people with disabilities and their families. That being said, my knowledge gained as a result of working with these disability related agencies and organization pails in comparison to my experience gained by being the sole sibling to my older brother who has significant intellectual and developmental disabilities (both physical and cognitive).

Let me start out by saying that Medicaid, for a number of reasons, is an extremely vital program to people with disabilities. Medicaid is a robust and

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comprehensive healthcare program which anchors itself in providing supports and services to people with disabilities in community based settings, as opposed to institutional type environments. It provides coverage for extensive medical care, including special types of therapies, not uncommonly necessary to people with significant disabilities and often not covered by employer based insurance plans (and likely not covered by the plans you'll find on the exchanges). Medicaid can also provide vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities, so that our folks can be afforded the opportunity to obtain employment along side their typically-abled peers. There are plenty of people with disabilities in the state of Michigan that are forced to remain out of the work force or settle for jobs making, in some instances, literally under the minimum wage so that they do not put the very supports and services, garnered though Medicaid, in jeopardy. This bill would allow them the opportunity to take a more aggressive role in the employment sector without the fear of losing the primary component which allows their independence. Simple put, Medicaid gives people with disabilities the opportunity to live as productively and independently as possible.

It is likely that you will hear people testify today that Medicaid is "broken", Medicaid is not broken despite one report out of a state that is not Michigan and that has never been successfully replicated in any nationwide fashion. The key legitimate criticism of Medicaid is access. Doctors, because of low reimbursement rates, often don't take Medicaid patients, so regardless of whether or not you have Medicaid; you wouldn't be able to find a physician to treat you. This Senate substitute addresses this by making certain that recipients/enrollees of this program have access to a primary care practitioner, presumably practitioners that of course take these patients.

There are multiple components in this bill that act to deter fraud and increase the reporting of such instances. There are measures to curb the often significantly high cost of end of life care through better awareness of advanced directives. There are cost sharing measures to off set future expenses. And there are financial incentives to beneficiaries to proactively increase their levels of health (personal responsibility). These provisions, along with others written into this bill, act to increase the overall well being of low income folks in Michigan, while at the same time increasing the financial well being of the State.

Lastly, under the circumstance that this bill does not have the desired outcomes in which it was intended for, there is little doubt that this legislative body or the people of Michigan will not observe this. The evidence based reporting requirements in this bill are extensive and encompass a high degree of transparency. I think this is a testament to the level of responsibility and accountability put forth in this bills development.

In conclusion this bill is not only highly beneficial to people with disabilities, but also beneficial to hundreds of thousands of their typically-abled peers as well (many of which who are direct care workers and others responsible for the well being of people with disabilities). I encourage you all to proceed with the passage of this legislation as quickly as you find responsible.

Thank you and at this time I will take any questions.